



## COVID-19 DIGITAL STRESS SURVIVAL KIT

Many of us share the growing anxiety and stress related to the unknown economic and health outcomes of COVID-19. I certainly have been feeling the impacts of the collective mindset on my mental health directly.

First and foremost, you need to know these two things:

1. You are not alone.
2. Your feelings are normal.

To help mitigate the tension, stress, and feelings of anxiety, I've created this little "Digital Stress Survival Kit" which compiles helpful thoughts, coping mechanisms, activities, and resources (in no particular order). This is certainly not an exhaustive list, but a good place to start.

### 1. Move Your Body. Move Your Body. MOVE YOUR BODY.

- According to the Anxiety and Depression Association of America (ADAA), "regular participation in aerobic exercise has been shown to decrease overall levels of tension, elevate and stabilize mood, improve sleep, and improve self-esteem. Even five minutes of aerobic exercise can stimulate anti-anxiety effects."
- "Move your body. Change your mind." - Rachel Hollis
- Ideas:
  - Take your pups for a 15-20 minute walk
  - Walk around the block or do a 10 minute bodyweight workout on your lunch break ->  
<https://www.self.com/story/a-10-minute-bodyweight-workout-you-can-do-during-your-lunch-break-without-getting-too-sweaty>
  - Home workout programs FOR FREE
    - [Health with Shannon Dolan - FREE home workouts](#)
    - 2 months free access to Kelsey Heenan's Hiitburn app  
<https://hiitburn.samcart.com/products/hiitburn-workout-app>
    - Nike Training Club app
    - FitOn app

- Paid home workout programs
  - Beachbody on Demand (I'm personally obsessed with this - It's like Netflix for fitness)

## 2. Drink Half Your Body Weight in Ounces of Water per Day

- Example: I weigh 170 lb.  $170 \div 2 = 85$ . My goal is to drink about 90 oz water per day, almost  $\frac{3}{4}$  gallon.
- Why? Stress can cause dehydration, and dehydration can exacerbate stress. How?
  - According to this [WebMD article](#), "studies have shown that being just half a liter dehydrated can increase your cortisol [one of your stress hormones] levels. Staying in a good hydrated status can keep your stress levels down."
  - "You're actually likely to get more dehydrated when you're under stress, because your heart rate is up and you're breathing more heavily, so you're losing fluid. And during times of stress, you're more likely to forget to drink and eat well. Just getting enough fluids helps to keep you at your best during times like these."

## 3. Get 7-8 Hours of Sleep Every Night

- It's simple. Set a bedtime. Stick to it. And take your butt to bed.
- Start winding down 2 hours beforehand (no TV, phone, or computer screens during this time).
- Draw yourself a warm bath, spritz some lavender on your pillow, light a candle, dim the lights. Drink some sleepytime tea. Read a book. Do some journaling. Whatever you gotta do to set the mood!

## 4. Practice Mindfulness & Meditation

- There's a lot that we can't control right now. Honestly, this statement isn't any more applicable now than during an average day, BUT I feel it's more critical at a time like this. Focusing our thoughts on what we CANNOT control contributes to feelings of stress and anxiety. Instead, try to focus on what you CAN control: your mindset, your body, your habits. Here's how:
  - When you catch yourself swimming in negative or worrisome thoughts, here are some ways to repeatedly bring yourself back to the present moment.
    - Hyperfocus on the task you're completing
    - Snuggle that puppy or kitten you're holding (adult and senior pets are also puppies and kittens to me)
    - Put some headphones in with uplifting music while you're doing your callbacks
    - Perform the 5-4-3-2-1 mindfulness trick -- STOP and identify:
      - 5 things you can see
      - 4 things you can hear



- 3 things you can feel
- 2 things you can smell
- 1 thing you can taste
- Say to yourself, “I am alive. I am healthy. I am here.”
- Meditation
  - This is one of the most CRUCIAL parts of my daily routine. According to [Headspace](#), regular meditation helps manage stress, reduces anxiety, increases focus and mental resilience, reduces feelings of aggression and irritability, and increases positive emotions.
  - You might say to yourself, “Well, I don’t know how to meditate.” Nobody does! Which is why I started with guided meditations through the Headspace App. They are currently offering a 6 month free trial through FIGS [here](#).
  - Don’t wanna do a free trial? Well here is a link for completely FREE collection of Headspace meditations designed to weather the storm: <https://www.headspace.com/covid-19>
- SOS Square Breathing
 

For when you need a quick rescue exercise to calm yourself down:

  - Go to the bathroom or anywhere you can get away for a moment if you need to first, or just pause what you’re doing (if safe to do so). Inhale for 4 counts → hold for 4 counts → exhale for 4 counts → hold for 4 counts → repeat as long as necessary

## 5. Start a Daily Gratitude Practice

- Practicing gratitude has been shown to reduce stress and depression and improve resilience and well-being. It shifts your mind from focusing on all the negative and things you can’t control to focusing on the good things happening FOR you.
- Every day, write down or say out loud 3-5 things that you are grateful for. You could use your journal, a sticky note, a group message between your besties, or a work communication app like Slack.

## 6. Limit Your Social Media and News Consumption

- Personally, I’m only checking the news and updates once daily or less and ONLY from reputable sources. Here’s what I’m using:
  - NPR’s Up First podcast - less than 15 minutes long, gives me the top 3 stories of the day that I need to know. **Daily.**
  - [Coronavirus.gov](#) - CDC’s most up-to-date information. **As needed.**
  - State local department of health website (ex: [dph.georgia.gov](#)). You can probably google your state + “department of public health” and find it. **As needed.**



- [American Veterinary Medical Association COVID-19 Info Center](#) As needed.

- I am NOT scrolling on IG or Facebook at all really. Maybe 5-10 minutes a day and that's IT. I've found it refreshing.

## 7. Refrain from Unnecessary Doomsday Discussions

Anxious thoughts are CONTAGIOUS AF. Have you noticed?

- Try to catch yourself when you start projecting your worries and concerns on others in large group settings.
- Avoid negative or fear-mongering discussions.
- If you're feeling triggered by a discussion nearby, either walk away or put some headphones in (if you can).
- Feel comfortable in holding others accountable to more positive thinking/speaking.
- Set time or place boundaries and call it a "Corona-discussion-free Zone". For example, I asked my partner last night if we could have ZERO coronavirus discussions after 7pm.

## 8. Ask for Help

- Schedule a session with a mental health professional
- Text HOME to 741741 to talk with a crisis counselor at [Crisis Text Line](#) - it's free, confidential, and available 24/7.
- <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/chat/>
- Utilize your local VMA's well-being resources. Georgia Veterinary Medical Association (GVMA) members have access to an employee assistance program (EAP) that offers help for personal and/or professional concerns by providing free, confidential, short-term counseling and personal consultation. <https://gvma.memberclicks.net/EAP>

## 9. Additional resources:

- <https://www.virusanxiety.com/> - Full of free resources including meditations and articles curated daily to help you care for your mental health; FAQ answered by mental health experts; random internet things to help you recenter, feel soothed, and find some joy, and MORE.
- [Shine app](#) - support system for daily stress and anxiety. I use it often to check in with my gratitude and find new resources on how to improve my mental health and well-being. Learn a new self-care strategy every day, get support from a diverse community, and explore an audio library of over 500+ original meditations, bedtime stories, and ambient music to help you shift your mindset or mood.
- [Handling Chaos Podcast Series](#) by Brooke Castillo - This woman is a WIZARD of mindset mastery. Pleeeeeease check this out.
- More from me? Find me on IG [@resiliencerisingvet](#)

